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ABSTRACT

Noting that modern technology is challenging both the form and the function of the book and its role as the principal instrument for transmitting accumulated knowledge and ideas, this report examines the ways in which technological innovation is modifying the role and function of reading in industralized societies and how readers are integrating the book into a broader range of media sources. Following a brief introduction that discusses the economic and technological threats to books, the first section of the paper reviews the history of books and publishing, and argues that the rapid increase in the number of titles published in countries around the world since 1950 will soon begin to level off. It also cites statistics concerning reading habits in several industralized nations and looks at the professions that have contributed to the production of books, suggesting ways that technology will change them. The second section discusses the importance of promoting reading as a means of ensuring the survival of books, and the third presents possible scenarios for the near-future prospects of the book and reading, specifically school and university textbooks, encyclopedias and dictionaries, scientific publications, practical books, and general literature. The final chapter offers suggestions for responding to technological threats to the book and to reading. (FL)

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THE FUTURE OF THE BOOK

PART II—THE CHANGING ROLE OF READING

by Michel Gault

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THE FUTURE OF THE BOOK

Part II

The changing role of reading

A report prepared by Michel Gault
for the French National Commission for Unesco

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PREFACE

Books are among the oldest media of mass communication; their permanence as artifacts that can be manipulated over centuries and across frontiers has assured them a privileged place in society. Yet the book is no longer unique in this sense. Modern technology is challenging both the form and function of the book and its role as the principal instrument for transmitting accumulated knowledge and new ideas.

Deciding that it was of vital importance to place these new circumstances into perspective, Unesco has initiated a comprehensive study to explore the character of these changes and their expected impact on the future. As a first step, a number of well-known experts from various book professions and regions of the world were gathered together to advise on the nature and scope of the issues that called for further study.

The present document--the second to appear within the framework of this study--is concerned with the ways in which technological innovation is modifying the role and function of reading in industrialized societies, and how readers themselves are integrating the book into a new and broader range of media sources. It has been prepared, under the responsibility of the French National Commission for Unesco, by Mr Michel Gault, who has had long experience in the publishing world in France. The study is based, in part, on the conclusions of an international symposium on the future of books and reading in industrialized countries, organized by the National Commission with the support of Unesco in Paris from 24-26 November 1981 and attended by ten or so book specialists from a number of European countries and the United States of America.

The author is responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this text, and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of Unesco and do not commit the Organization.

INTRODUCTION

BOOKS: A VULNERABLE AND ENDANGERED EXISTENCE

We instinctively tend to identify books with culture, and are incapable of imagining a world without books. In actual fact, however, books as such lead a vulnerable existence which began only recently with the invention of printing.

It is only very recently that, in the economically developed countries, they have truly become a medium of mass communication. Paradoxically, during the same period of mankind's cultural development, at a time when the developing countries are aspiring to gain access at last to the world of books, their existence is beginning to be seriously endangered in the very places where they have attained the status of mass communication media.

The first danger: economic changes

Hitherto, publishers were a skilled independent profession, able to rely on a wide network of booksellers and thus to play their active and creative role to the full, producing books of a high cultural standard. Economic changes have gradually compelled publishers to cover their investments with borrowed capital, often from banks, only to find themselves implicated in a logic of economic development that has pushed them into publishing more and more quick-selling books. They are gradually losing their independence and becoming like other industrialists, subjected to the laws of short-term profitability.

This process entails the emergence of a number of large, often multinational, groups, to the detriment of the network of independent publishers producing a wealth and variety of high-quality products.

Another even greater danger overshadows books

A technological threat, according to some, is gradually making books an anachronism doomed to extinction. It is to be wondered whether the transition from the 'Gutenberg galaxy' to the 'Marconi galaxy' is not already well under way.

In fact, what is happening before our very eyes is a sweeping technological revolution that is gradually transforming the very bases of the traditional methods for the storage and exchange of information--and we now live in a civilization of information--such that books are losing at least part of the functions they have hitherto been required to fulfil.

Like any fundamental technological change, this one is ambivalent and may offer one or other of various radically different prospects for the future of the book.

It may be the beginning of a rapid end, as some do not hesitate to predict, and at times to advocate, arguing that the book is a costly and unwieldy medium which could usefully be replaced by the new media now available and that there is no point in burdening oneself with old fashioned things. An expert from Yale University, during a recent symposium, for instance, spoke of the time in the near future when television screens directly linked with the Library of Congress would provide everybody with access to the fullest information on contemporary research and science.

He looked forward to the day when access to an 'intelligent' computer could be made direct by voice, without recourse to a computer language, thus saving the developing countries the long and wearisome task which the now developed nations had to pass through to learn to read and write. Naturally enough, the representatives of the developing countries heavily stressed, and rightly so, that the prospects thus opened up would lead to all-out cultural neo-colonialism.

Other specialists point out, on the other hand, that books are, by comparison with even miniaturized computers, still extraordinary lightweight, easy to handle and long-lasting: in comparison with other technologies, they are very cheap, enable each reader to progress at his own speed and to go back over any passage he wishes, require no intermediaries and can be used anywhere, in any circumstances, without any risk of breaking down.

Be that as it may, this technological revolution may also be an occasion for a redefinition of the book's status and role. Relieved by new technologies of certain functions of documentation and information storage, which computers could perform better and more cheaply, books would thus be able to revert to a truly cultural role: putting an active reader into contact with an author with whom he has chosen to keep company through the unique relationship of reading.

The technological revolution would thus have the paradoxical effect of liberating reading and its most favoured medium, books.

Jean-Paul Sartre clearly observed the ambivalent situation we are now experiencing when he wrote: 'A book is either just a little packet of dry leaves, or else a magnificent form in movement: reading'.

At the same time, books are losing what remained of their sacral character: cheap editions and the increasing numbers of readers have turned them into commonplace objects, and they are no longer the pre-eminent vehicle of knowledge. This could either be their eventual deathblow, or equally, the source of a new lease of life as long as we take steps to help the process along.

I. FACTS AND FIGURES BEHIND THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. A short look back

The present-day structure of the book professions, their vulnerability to current changes and the major features of the transformations we are now witnessing--all these can only be understood if they are quickly replaced in the context of their historical development. The past sheds light not only on the present, but also on the future which is taking shape before us, particularly as regards a product that is the vector of cultural values like the book.

At the outset, the printer and the bookseller were one and the same, and publishers did not exist. This 'bookman' worked to meet the demands of a clientele consisting originally of scholars, and then, from the sixteenth century onwards, of magistrates and officials, to expand in the nineteenth century to satisfy the requirements of a bourgeoisie then in the ascendent. After the take-off of the first industrial revolution, around 1820, a constant and growing demand for books arose: the requirements of the new ruling classes had to be met and the education efforts so vital for the progress of industrialization needed to be supported. It

was at this time that, following a long process of division of functions, the three different, but not always incompatible professions--publishers, booksellers and printers--emerged each with their own individualities.

Publishing as we now know it thus grew up relatively late. As a profession, it started often as an offshoot from the large bookshops, established often as early as the eighteenth century. To start with, the publisher often devoted himself exclusively to producing educational works. A number of the longest established French-language publishing houses began in this way, but the same process occurred elsewhere. For example, the Eugène Belin bookselling firm, established in 1777, started publishing in 1834; the bookseller Casterman, established in 1780, became the publisher of the same name in 1825 with its collection of costly editions; Hachette was set up in 1827, Larousse in 1852, etc. The trend was under way and the publisher, now in his turn the bookman par excellence, took his place beside the other book professionals, the bookseller and the printer.

Thus it would seem that the upsurge of publishing was linked to the industrial revolution, and it emerged as a separate profession as the result of a long process of division of functions. With the far-reaching technological revolution we are now experiencing, it is precisely this same division of functions that is being called into question; book clubs now prepare, print and sell their products direct; soon, with the emergence of new media, powerful multinational groups currently being established, will prepare and market their products, not even needing to go through the intermediate stage of printing (at least in the case of those which will set themselves up as suppliers for data banks).

This short historical review thus shows how the book professions grew up as a suitable response to a certain level of technological development and to the actual needs of a particular readership. Current technological developments and the emergence of different requirements of a new readership cannot but lead to a profound change in these professions, and are in danger of causing their disappearance if they are not able to change with the times.

2. A few figures

Statistics can be made to say almost anything, and nothing is more difficult to interpret properly than figures. Books and reading are an even more complicated matter, for it is not easy to tell whether everybody is talking about the same thing. For example, should we include in the number of book-buyers those who read what are in France called 'petits formats', i.e. strip-cartoon albums for adults, of often questionable quality? How to put into statistical form the information on readers of Proust, depending on whether they buy the three volumes of 'A la recherche du temps perdu' in the Pléiade collection or the twelve to fifteen volumes of a paperback edition? How about the readers of a Reader's Digest 'condensed books' supplement who claim to have read four books in a month, whereas they have in fact at most seen a condensed version? The statistics of public library readers are also subject to the same risks: are the figures for library visitors or book borrowers to be recorded? One needs also to distinguish between the choices of books made from amongst the stock selected by the librarian, and the unsorted, often mediocre books given to the library by its regulars, which are not recorded when they come in, but are when borrowed, thus distorting the statistics. One can therefore never be too cautious about statistics. Nevertheless, they do help us to illustrate our theme and are in general quite encouraging.

It is to be noted, for example, that figures for the production, sale and reading of books were virtually stable up to the Second World War--in France, few more books were published in the 1930s and 1940s than under Napoléon III. On the other hand, since the early 1950s these figures have increased extremely rapidly, and the trend shows no sign of slowing even though it coincides with the penetration of television, paperbacks and book clubs which it has been repeatedly said would be the death of books. This goes to show how careful one must be when making any judgements about this very special cultural object.

Between 1950 and 1970, the number of titles published rose:

from 11,849 to 22,935 in France;

from 13,009 to 31,249 in Japan;

from 14,049 to 45,369 in the Federal Republic of Germany;

from 17,072 to 33,441 in the United Kingdom.

In 1970, the USSR and the United States of America both claimed that 79,000 titles were published in each country.

If we are to take the most up-to-date figures available to us, further progress is to be seen:

France: 26,687 titles published in 1979;

Japan: 43,973 in 1978;

Federal Republic of Germany: 50,950 in 1978;

United Kingdom: 36,196 in 1977;

USSR: 85,395 in 1977;

United States of America: 85,126 in 1978.

It is particularly difficult to make any forecasts for the beginning of the 1980s. However, it is to be supposed that in a general context of severe economic crisis, the factors which had previously helped, in spite of everything, to stimulate the book market, may well also lose momentum.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that in the coming years:

the number of titles published will progress very little;

paperbacks, the progression of which accounted for part of the aforementioned growth, have now conquered the market of the young and thus of new customers. Continued growth in this sector only seems possible at the expense of hardbacks; this would merely represent a change-over of publications, and not an overall increase in their number;

book clubs have developed considerably in all countries, but their growth has now virtually halted, except in the United Kingdom and Italy where room for substantial further expansion still exists. It is to be stressed that the growth of these clubs is the second element that explains the increase in the statistics for publications and reading in general over the last three decades.

We therefore now seem to be heading for a stabilization in book production in the years to come.

Statistics on reading too can only enable us to gain a partial insight into the phenomenon. A new method of book research (the 'use and gratification method') takes into consideration the daily consumption of books.

(a) For the Federal Republic of Germany, the figures are as follows:

94 per cent of homes possess books;

the average member of the public aged over 18 devotes 18½ hours per month to reading books (i.e. 10 per cent of the total time given over to the media);

82 per cent of the public open a book at least once a month, and 44 per cent do so in an average day;

books are in the strongest position among the young;

each year, a good half of the German population buys at least one book; 20 per cent buy at least one a month.

(b) In the United States of America, a survey carried out in 1949 showed that 25 to 30 per cent of the population read at least one book a month. Another survey conducted in 1975 revealed that 85 per cent of Americans had read all or part of a book during the preceding year, but--and this is the figure that can be taken as representative of the actual proportion of book readers--56 per cent had read a book during the month leading up to the time of the survey. In six months, three out of five readers had read less than six books and the other two had read six or more.

Most readers are young, have a general cultural background and a high income; women read the most. At the same time, it can be noted that between 1948 and 1979 the number of bookshops rose from 2,900 to 12,000 discounting supermarkets, school and university bookshops and book clubs. Over the same period, the number of libraries rose from 11,000 to 29,000.

In 1974-1976, a survey revealed that more than four Americans out of every five (83 per cent of the population) went to a library fairly regularly:

54 per cent at least twice in the two years;

29 per cent at least once every two months. Of these, 6 per cent had done so 50 times or more. It is to be noted that these 6 per cent of regulars are mainly young female students or educated young women;

public library attendance represents 74 per cent of the total, that of school libraries 21 per cent, that of private or workplace libraries 4 per cent.

It may be of interest to note that over the same period--1950 to 1978--the number of homes with television rose from 4 to 72 million (i.e. from 10 per cent to 98 per cent of the total), 47 per cent of them owning two or more sets.

Thirty million homes watch television regularly (on average 4 hours 35 minutes per day in 1950, a figure which rose to 6 hours 7 minutes in 1975). In 1978, the average adult watched television for 2 hours 46 minutes; the trend would seem to be downwards since then.

Other figures show that a working man watches television for 99 minutes a day, a woman who goes out to work does so for 62 minutes, and a housewife for 96 minutes. A working man devotes on average 5 minutes to book-reading, 6 minutes to magazines and 25 minutes to newspapers. For the working woman, these figures are 4 minutes for books, 4 minutes for magazines and 30 minutes for newspapers. The housewife devotes 7 minutes to books, 6 minutes to magazines and 21 minutes to newspapers.

(c) In France, in 1967, the percentage of people who read nothing was 53 per cent, with the figure reaching 74 per cent among factory workers and 82 per cent among farm workers. In December 1981, a poll showed that the proportion of non-readers had dropped to only 33 per cent of the population.

The French read mainly general fiction (56 per cent), then history books, stories from history, memoirs and reminiscences (46 per cent), detective and spy stories (32 per cent). Forty-six per cent buy their books in bookshops, 29 per cent borrow them from friends or family, 28 per cent subscribe to book clubs or mail order schemes, 22 per cent borrow the books they read from a library and 12 per cent buy them in supermarkets or department stores. For 38 per cent of them, their choice is determined by word of mouth, for 30 per cent by radio or television, for 29 per cent it is the press reviews that govern their choice, and librarians' advice only counts in 3 per cent of cases.

In December 1973, 30 per cent of the French population owned less than five books (and of these 30 per cent, 27 per cent owned none); 33 per cent owned from 5 to 50 books; 37 per cent possessed more than 50 (and of these, the average was 25 to 50 among farmers and workers, 50 to 100 in the professional and white-collar categories, and 100 to 250 in the professions).

In the area of public library attendance, the figures are particularly low in France in relation to the other industrialized countries, situated at under 10 per cent, whereas the average is 25 to 30 per cent in the United Kingdom and North America and even 50 per cent in West Germany and Denmark. Libraries lend on average 2.79 books per inhabitant per annum in France, against 10 in the United Kingdom and 24 in the Federal Republic of Germany. To these figures should be added those concerning workplace and club libraries. A hope of future progress is indicated by the fact that 22 per cent of children between the ages of 4 and 13 in urban districts are members of a public library.

In parallel to this, it is noteworthy that 55 per cent of French people regularly read one or more daily papers (although the press often proves to be an effective intermediary between potential readers and books, this percentage does not necessarily convey the number of readers of printed works) and 43 per cent read periodicals in general (these latter are readers of books).

(d) In the United Kingdom, a 1979 survey based on the question 'How did you come to hear of the latest book you read?' produced the following answers:

	%
seen in a library or bookshop	26
by word of mouth	23
press and magazine reviews	10
television and radio	9
gifts	5
choice made at random	4
favourite author	4
book club	4
advertising	4
further education (evening classes)	1
miscellaneous	9

Despite notable differences from country to country and according to their different cultural traditions, as soon as one looks at them in detail one sees that these figures far exceed anything that could have been foreseen from previous surveys; and the same applies to other countries. Thus, despite the number of non-readers, which remains considerable, books have now definitely become a mass communication medium attracting large sectors of the population.

This democratization of reading is a very important new departure that has been taking shape over the last few decades. The process still has a long way to go, and it is here that the decisive growth potential for the future lies: the fact upon which all the surveys concur is that, despite the consumption of books being higher than expected, 50 per cent of people still read relatively little if at all. The book's future in the decades to come depends first on whether these 'under-consumers' of books can be won over to reading.

However, for books to be given a truly secure future, the structures governing their production will have to remain in existence. We therefore need to take a look back over the professions that contribute to the production of books today and see how they will be required to change with the advent of new technology.

3. The traditional book professions and the challenge of technological development:

1. The publisher is the driving force in the book world. As we saw earlier, his function developed relatively late, gradually detaching itself from the functions of printers and booksellers. Today, the printer has become a technical executant (the publisher has his own production facilities which leave the initiative in this area to him), and the bookseller is seen more often than not as merely a necessary intermediary between publisher and reader (here again, moreover, it is the publisher who retains the initiative, through the standing-order system which enables him to monitor the initial placing of his publications in bookshops).

The publisher, descended from the printer, eventually, in many cases, came to take control of his own printing house. In the 1950s and 1960s in France, publishers gradually relinquished their printing activities, but such developments have not occurred in either Spain or Italy and major publishing houses are still very often linked to important printing concerns. In the same way, publishers have long had their own network of bookshops.

Despite its imperfections, this network of independent publishers opens up to any potential author or writer the possibility of publishing his work and seeing it placed on offer to his prospective readers. Of course, in reality things are not always so ideal, but it is a fact that the publisher enjoys great freedom of initiative which enables him to play a truly active role to the benefit of books. In this system, small publishers can exist alongside the major firms. A varied network of specialized bookshops (i.e. solely or mainly specializing in the sale of books proper) enables one and all to disseminate their publications.

Since the end of the Second World War, this system has been attacked on various fronts. While involving the other book professions directly, these transformations have inevitably affected the publishing system as well.

2. Production techniques have undergone very major changes, and printers have been compelled either to adapt or to disappear. Printing groups have become bigger and more concentrated, with increasingly onerous investments in capital equipment which have had to be amortized at a time when profit margins had to be cut to a minimum to stay competitive. The consequence of this frantic concentration has been, in France, a wave of bankruptcies and shutdowns which in the long run are jeopardizing the very existence of a domestic industry.

3. For their part, booksellers, who were in direct contact with the publisher, were the most important, if not the only, middlemen in the book-selling business. Their status has changed considerably: sales of books outside bookshops (group-buying pools, mail order, supermarket and department store sales) have become more and more important and represent an increasing percentage of overall book sales--at present, bookshops account for only 60 per cent of total sales. At the same time, the bookshops have tended to move away from specialization and towards the selling of other products: stationery, educational or non-educational games, records and a range of products for manual activities. The specialized bookshops are finding it increasingly difficult to survive in the face of the competition from the big stores, which have no hesitation in offering books sure to sell well at prices often lower than those at which an independent bookseller can obtain them, and using them as a loss-leader.

The seriousness of the situation can well be imagined: it is threatening the very existence of this diversified network of booksellers throughout the country, to the benefit of a small number of group-buying pools, department or chain stores which encourage the distribution of the easy-to-sell works (popular novels, practical books and best-sellers), to the detriment of essays and other more ambitious works.

4. The distribution of books also gives rise to enormous problems which, by affecting the future of publishers also affect that of books.

More and more often, particularly in France--whereas in the United Kingdom the traditional distribution structures have been less affected by the phenomenon of concentration--the publisher is gradually losing control of the distribution of his own publications. Rising costs and technological developments have led to the formation of major distribution groups. While it is true that they help to speed up distribution and restrain the rise in costs, in so doing they have also come to bankroll the publishers. This inevitably leads them to taking control of the publishers as soon as they find themselves in difficulty, which is bound to happen to any publisher at some time.

In France, the case of the Hachette group is indicative of this problem: through its distribution activities, the group has gradually managed to take over the control of its subsidiaries such as Grasset, Stock and Fayard.

The concern caused over the Matra-Hachette agreements is understandable. It should be remembered that Matra controls the 'Europe No. 1' radio station.

Publishers are reacting to these phenomena of concentration which are threatening their independence by entering into more and more international co-publishing agreements (publication of children's books, encyclopedias or illustrated albums could hardly be contemplated otherwise); they are also joining forces to form multinational groups. Over recent years, for example, the British publisher Harrap has set up subsidiaries in the Federal Republic of Germany and France, the French publisher Lattès has opened up a company in the United States of America. The powerful German publisher Bertelsmann is continuing to expand in a highly significant way, setting up around the world a series of book clubs working on a system which had already enabled it to establish in Germany a club with over six million members. Ninety countries have been or are to be penetrated, including Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and the United States of America. In France, the 'France-Loisirs' club, a part of the Bertelsmann group, works on the same basis. It was set up through a partnership with a French group ('les Presses de la Cité') and today has more than three million members and subsidiaries in Belgium, Switzerland and Quebec. This club structure has managed very cleverly to work in parallel with a network of associated bookshops (over three hundred in France) which are proving to be effectivie outlets.

In all sectors, therefore, we are witnessing similar and convergent developments, which work towards the setting-up of a much smaller number of increasingly concentrated and powerful groups.

The aim now is to distribute, in, the largest possible quantities and shortest possible time, easy-selling works turned out purely for sale, the saleability requirement thus indirectly but inexorably imposing itself. Quite apart from any censorship of an ideological nature, control or pre-set directives, market forces exert a particularly restrictive effect. For instance, a publisher who is hesitating as to whether he should undertake a translation--a type of publication which, by its nature, is becoming more and more expensive--is obliged to consult the two or three book distribution chains which can offer the guarantee of adequate initial sales. In addition, he must consult one or more book clubs and paperback publishers, and he then makes up his mind about whether to publish or not on the basis of the sales guarantees that have been proposed to him. In such a case, although one cannot talk of publishing directives being issued by commercial firms, nobody could seriously accuse the publisher of shirking his responsibilities if he is no longer able to rely on a diversified network of booksellers and is compelled to bow to the decisions of a small number of organizations--less than ten--decisions which determine whether the book will be published or not.

Publishers thus become suppliers, losing their originality and individual mission, while in some cases the chains which distribute books to the big stores or the popular media (commercial radio stations) publish these general-consumption works directly themselves.

The problem is a difficult one and one should not jump to conclusions too quickly. Any person who is won round to reading represents a victory, and these new forms of wide-distribution publications should not be too hastily condemned. The problem is, however, that quality books, scientific publishing and specialized bookshops are all liable to be swept away together by this irresistible current.

This is why it is necessary to examine very closely and to encourage all the regional or local publishing activities that have grown up over recent years.

It may seem paradoxical that these schemes should be increasing in number at the very same time as enormous multinational communication groups are being formed. We consider this to be a hopeful development for the future of the book: these publishers are enabling new writers to express themselves and a new section of the public to gain access to books, a world of books which no longer seems to them to be removed from their daily preoccupations and lives.

This phenomenon links up with that of publications in national or regional languages, and current policies to promote such publications in multinational countries like the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia could be taken as a model. In Hungary, the linguistic minorities (Romanians, Slovenes) are entitled to publications in their own language, as are the Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries. This is a crucial problem: each nation should encourage its linguistic minorities to have access to culture in their own language, following the example of the Swedish Constitution which recognizes the rights of children from the various linguistic minorities to education in their mother tongue.

In the same way, the numerous university publishing experiments appear to be very encouraging. In France, this is a quite recent phenomenon (Presses de l'Université de Lille, Presses de l'Université de Grenoble, Editions de l'Institut des Sciences Politiques, etc.). The major difficulty facing these new publishing structures is once again that of distribution, the traditional networks proving to be too unwieldy and costly for this type of publication, which can only be acquired by a very small number of university bookshops (under 200).

Authors' attempts to publish their own works (poetry, memoirs, etc.), unless the authors are well known in the region, encounter the same promotional and distribution difficulties.

Despite the difficulties, we consider that these many experiences provide a measure of hope; they are enabling books, if nothing else, to fully recover their role as the voice of an original culture and personality at a time when communication, at the level of the big concerns, is becoming steadily more international, following a single, restrictive model.

II. SOME COMPONENTS OF A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO READING

Although it is relatively easy to speak about books--most people know the product in question and the production and distribution processes involved--it is quite a different matter when it comes to the concept of reading, which covers a whole range of different situations. Yet, as we have stressed from the beginning of this report, it is the process of reading alone which is the basis and justification for any cultural policy designed to defend and promote books: <u>there can be no future for books without a future for reading</u>.

The difficulties in any consideration of the concept of reading spring mainly from the 'deplorable state of descriptive statistics in this field', to use the terms of the French sociologist Jean-Claude Passeron. Like him, we can only hope that a considerable effort will be made to expand and clarify our knowledge in this area, which would enable the administrative departments to take fuller account of the analysis requirements developed in the field.

1. Literacy-training strategies and reading strategies

In the industrialized countries such as those we are dealing with here, it may be considered that literacy is now a 90 per cent success. The term literacy, in this sense, means the ability to understand a written message (which as such has no meaning for the eye) and to transform it into an oral message which is comprehensible to the ear. This is, however, merely what might be termed 'survival reading'.

Establishing a relationship with a book requires, however, a quite different activity: the corresponding reading strategy only affects at most 30 per cent of the population. In current conditions, the remaining 70 per cent will always be non-readers, unless they can be given access in one way or another to these reading strategies which can turn them into real readers.

It is therefore important to know what is meant when talking of reader and reading. To start with, one must make a distinction between reading strategies and literacy-training strategies, the former relating to the behaviour of the true reader, the latter to that of a 'decoder' of written texts. In rapid speech, an average of 10,000 to 15,000 words an hour are used. We can read 20,000 to 30,000 words an hour on average (speed reading can take this figure up to as many as 50,000). At less than 15,000 words per hour, the reader begins to flag and the mind wanders. For the 'decoder' who cannot go beyond this speed, use of the written word is valueless, except for the 'survival reading' referred to above.

In the light of the figures given above, it would indeed appear that to ask whether books are going to last or not is raising a false problem: as long as people read books and draw benefit from using this form of communication, books will live on. Otherwise they will become useless and die out. Thus, we are back to the problem of that majority of 'non-readers' (and not illiterates in the strict sense) and their crucial importance for the future of the book.

The school has a vital role to play in this respect, and one very different from the role it is required to assume in the developing countries. In the latter, literacy teaching, in the strict sense of the term, is a matter of great urgency, whereas in the industrialized countries, schools have, by continuing to concentrate on teaching merely to decode, to the detriment of all other aspects of this encounter with the written word, sidestepped the real problem.

We shall have occasion to return to the question of the school to note that positive developments are taking place. We may, however, immediately note a harmful unsuitability of the written word to the reader's requirements. It has been demonstrated, for example, that school books are often unsuitable, because prior thought has not been given to their 'readability': school books for eight year-olds would seem to be more within the readability range of children of twelve but children of that age would find them too elementary in content.

In-depth research into this issue has shown that a written text, in order to be readable, requires its target reader to possess at least 80 per cent of the information it conveys, thus enabling him to assimilate the remaining 20 per cent of information he previously lacked. On the other hand, a very good acquaintance with the subject involved can offset a poor command of reading skills in this and only this respect. Thus one may come across readers who are highly specialized in a single area of knowledge, specialized but 'accidental' readers. These are usually working-class readers, but academics may easily display the same behaviour, and, as a result of excessive specialization, become almost illiterate in any field outside their own.

The learning of the strategies of reading could take place in schools, provided they reconsider their objectives, but in fact the process is something far broader: learning to read in this sense begins in very early childhood and is therefore a task for society as a whole, comparable to that undertaken at the beginning of this century to promote hygiene.

2. Reading/non-reading: readers/non-readers

In fact, our problem is one of true democratization of access to books and reading. Of course, to achieve this one must publish many books cheaply, give them wide distribution and make them available to the public through a vast network of libraries spreading out to wherever people live, in town or country, work and spend their free time. But this will have no effect unless it is combined with action on reading habits to entice a section of the non-reading population, the size of which is about the same in all the countries under consideration, to take up reading and pick up a book.

A socio-psycho-ethnological study at present being conducted by the Laboratoire associé des sciences de l'information et de la communication (LASIC), at the request of the French Ministry of Culture's Research Department, into reading habits of young workers in the Bordeaux area, is producing some significant and enlightening facts.

The young people involved are aged between 18 and 23, their wages are close to the national guaranteed minimum, and although most of them (48 out of 75) still live with their parents, they consider themselves to be independent. They are unable to identify with school, which they see as a place for bourgeois culture, and this is influencing their attitude towards books.

The first thing to be observed is that nearly half (31 out of 75) are aware that they are reading much less now they are working, and at the same time many have stopped playing the sport they previously practised; this is particularly true of the girls. It becomes apparent that their spare time is regulated by the hours they work. The most important thing for them is the momentary desire, the time they have 'to themselves', the time 'to waste'. It should be pointed out that these young people, who have been to varying degrees rejected by the school system, have little hope of any sort of professional advancement; few attend night school or follow courses by correspondence. When they do read, it is purely gratuitous reading: the more organized their work is, the more they turn to escapist reading.

These young people also show a lack of curiosity (decreasing with age) which verges on cultural 'blindness': the world of books, libraries and bookshops is totally foreign to them. On top of this they are also culturally 'deaf': they do not heed the media when they refer to books.

One must also take into consideration the obstacle of a limited budget (priority goes to passing the driving test or buying a car).

The major obstacle remains the difficulty they have in choosing--a result of the lack of a cultural background--and in respecting the constraints of the traditional libraries: a fortnight's loan of a book is not enough. This explains the success among the young of the big stores and supermarkets (where pre-selected books, particularly action stories, are to be found among other products, making access easier) and book buying from salesmen and through mail-order schemes (the Cousteau encyclopedias are purchased in this way, and have become known through

television). These young people are full of praise for the book clubs: they receive the books at home, the selection has already been made, they feel at home in shops like those of France-Loisirs, etc.

Leaving the parental home brings about a further decline in reading (even the daily paper is abandoned).

The young who do carry on reading have had at least one reading parent. Habits from school have been kept by these young people (Colette, Vian, Giono, etc.), but the works that the parents buy from salesmen (encyclopedias, Tolstoy, etc.) are not read; they are mirages in a cultural desert, and such family libraries are often lifeless.

Friends encourage the young people to read sports books, illustrated works, and particularly comics; however, with time, the ties grow weak, and the influence of these informal channels, initially very strong, declines.

It may be of interest to compare these results with those of a survey on reading in Slovenia (Yugoslavia).

The non-readers systematically plead lack of time, but closer investigation proves this to be untrue. In fact, readers are more active people than non-readers and in addition find the time to practice a sport, read the papers, watch television, etc.

Thus, for example, 25 per cent of non-readers have had television for eleven years, and 63 per cent do not own one.

The answers to the question 'Why did you stop reading?' may be broken down as follows:

1/3 stopped when they left school;

1/5 when they married;

1/6 were tired of reading;

1/7 for health reasons;

1/25 because of television.

It should be noted that 70 per cent of these non-readers buy books, over half of them for their children, a very few to decorate the home and a small number for friends.

Reading and non-reading; sociological studies on reading strategies as against literacy strategies; the analysis of reading habits amongst young workers in and around Bordeaux and the clues as to why people stop reading in Slovenia; all these have given a preliminary insight into the problem. Two major points can now be made:

firstly, that there is a link between activity in general and reading. The more active people are (particularly culturally) the more they read;

secondly, the capital observation that those whose parents read and who have lived in a family and social environment in which people read, read themselves. School alone cannot make good the lack of this influence--and, indeed, its approach to reading as being solely a matter of acquiring reading and writing skills may in itself be an impediment to reading. It is to be stressed once again that a distinction is to be drawn between this function of schools in the industrialized and developing countries.

Reading remains a private act, a personal and individual relationship with a book; it is the environment as a whole, as long as it is favourable, which encourages the setting-up of this relationship.

Consequently, anything which activates people, putting them into direct contact with books, countering the cultural and financial barriers will be positive and bring progress towards greater democracy in reading.

3. Towards democratization of access to books and reading

In matters of culture or reading, it seems that the way it is presented is just as important as what is presented. The problem cannot be brought down to mere economic data, and before we turn to the economic and technological conditions of book production, fundamental as they are, and to the changes to be expected therein, it appears essential first to emphasize that a book is first and foremost an instrument of communication, a message; the question is therefore how to enable the greatest number to join this current of communication.

Libraries as they are still only too frequently organized today do not permit such access to books for the greatest number. It is not merely a problem of size, number or location around the country, however important these factors may be. What is really needed is a thorough study of the life-styles of the potential readers and an analysis of what is holding them back; this should lead to a complete reappraisal of the institution. People must be able to procure books in other places: at work, at home, at their places of leisure, and equally in hospital, in prison, etc.

Furthermore, free access to books should be encouraged by following the existing cultural practices in culturally underprivileged milieux as far as possible on their own ground. Anything which enables those who read least to read a little more is a good thing, and from this point of view no book is a bad book.

To bring about a change in reading behaviour, it may be of value to consider the way the library actually works as a medium, the resistance it encounters and the limits to which it is subject. Apart from the question of opening hours, cataloguing and classifying are often an obstacle to the free appropriation of books. It is essential that the conditions governing choice of books be examined (for example, it appears that colour plays a not inconsiderable role, and that the white Gallimard books are more favourably received than the blue of the Nathan publications).

The main objective must be, however, to diversify reading places and reading situations as much as possible.

The library is a social setting which readers (particularly children) use in different ways according to their different social backgrounds. Many young readers make use of the actual place before they use the books it contains.

It is indeed on this basis that the youth reading clubs in Israel operate. These are places of quiet, open freely to all young people in the school or the working-class districts of towns. They are able to listen to cassettes (headphones are available); they are not pressed to read, but a number of pre-selected books (150) are put out for them. Gradually, it has been noted that they all start reading after six or seven months' attendance at these clubs, which they have eventually taken over as their own.

Similarly, it is important to enable the very young to discover reading well before they are due to start school. These children discover what it is to read properly through illustrated stories that are read to them at their own speed. This discovery of books, this first contact, makes it much easier for them at a later date to manage with the often harrowing experience of mastering the mechanics of reading. Once at school, the child is subjected, however good the teacher may be, to uniform schedules for learning which often prove to be an obstacle and a cause of repeated failure at school. The best way to learn to read is through this discovery of the book as a pleasure shared with the adult. The family is the ideal place for this learning adapted to individual strategies. This is a fundamental observation for any progress in this area: book-loving families must be formed. It is also a way of getting through to the parents. At the beginning of the century in the United Kingdom there existed what were called home libraries--small, family-style neighbourhood libraries--a concept which could usefully be adapted to modern circumstances. There is a need for many more 'reading and recreation centres' at the level of streets, blocks or individual buildings. In Sweden, library/day nurseries operate with the slogan 'Park your children in the library'. This scheme could be usefully expanded, provided that the related staffing problems are also taken into account.

As regards adults, it is even more difficult to overcome their resistance, and many attempts at taking the book to the potential readers have met with unexpected obstacles. These may at times involve problems of a social nature: in rural environments people are often ashamed of being seen entering a library or mobile library as was observed by a librarian who worked in a central lending library. One company librarian pointed, for his part, to other obstacles: the mere fact that people have to disclose their identity seems, at least in France, to be an often insurmountable barrier, particularly for immigrant workers who feel this necessary formality as a sort of police check. The mere presence, however unobtrusive, of a professional librarian has an influence on the choice of book--the workers feeling more at ease and selecting different books if the librarian is not there. The lending periods are also an obstacle, as is the need to go back through the library to borrow the book a work colleague has liked and recommended; exchange from hand to hand would be much preferred.

Despite these obstacles, more and more experiments are being undertaken to take books to where the people live, and are showing good results.

In Austria, there is a library carriage on Viennese commuter trains and on all journey lasting between half an hour and two hours, it is possible for the travellers to borrow books.

In Denmark and Sweden, an experiment involving books in cafeterias resembles practices in Poland where the press distribution services (the state company Ruch) own hundreds of special shops in the towns and villages which act as both newsagents where papers and magazines can be bought and also places of light refreshment and coffee-shops for people waiting for trains or coaches or on the way to the shops.

In West Germany, promotion drives are organized with the help of the television: list of books (on average 80 titles) are drawn up on a particular subject and refer to the appropriate bookshop (or library). A significant rise in sales, of the order of 30 per cent, has been noted, and people who had never set foot inside a bookshop before are seen entering them, booklist in hand, knowing exactly what they are to ask for. These schemes, conducted on a regional basis, require close co-operation with the booksellers, who need to have the necessary stocks in hand. Another way the television has been used to promote books is to give writers a five-minute peak viewing spot to talk about their books.

In Hungary, the 'week of book' is the occasion for a great public awareness campaign, enabling publishers to produce and launch their latest books, and queues of people form outside the kiosks which are found all over the country. These book weeks thus represent a busy time for the book trade, like Christmas and the New Year.

The presence of books in hospitals is an important element in this strategy: in France, in 1979, over two million people benefited from a reading service in hospitals. The books should not, however, be made available to the patients alone, but also to the medical and ancillary staff working there, whose working hours are not necessarily compatible with library opening hours, and, indeed, why not also the patients' families? This is the case in Denmark, where the public and hospital libraries work together. It has been noted that hospitalization may bring a patient back into touch with books after years of severed ties. These recaptured readers in 80 per cent of cases then continue attending public libraries.

4. Books and the other media

We have so far deliberately avoided raising the question of the definition of the term 'book'. Experience shows that any attempt of this kind leads to endless discussions, whereas in fact the opposing parties are perfectly aware that they are talking about the same thing.

Jean-Claude Passeron has emphasized this difficulty and suggests that these artificial barriers should be put behind us by concentrating on the message, which is the only way the medium, and the perceptions its users have of it, can be properly understood.[1]

We thus move on from the medium to the message, and from the message to what people make of it.

When one looks at the issue in this way, the artificial divergences vanish and one sees that the media are not at war: one does not drive out another. The image calls for commentary in natural language and the slide refers back to the accompanying leaflet. There is no risk of books being replaced in all their various roles by the other media, just as the image cannot completely replace the spoken word.

It is, however, safe to say that just as the emergence of television changed the radio and cinema (appearance of disaster films and super-spectaculars), and just as we are seeing television itself change before our very eyes with the arrival of satellites, in the same way books have already changed and will change still further with the appearance of the new media: they are set to become a new medium with a new role in society, intertwined with the other media.

At all events, we should not delude ourselves. 'The only truly audio-visual societies are societies without the written word, or traditional societies in which nearly all the population was barred from literacy and which entrusted to oral tradition, associated with painted or sculpted images, the major part of their social communication, whether in the field of education, learning, religion or art...'. 'Paradoxically, if the expression audio-visual is meant to designate the simultaneous and interrelated mobilization of the two senses, alphabetical writing would be the only fully audio-visual code (in the strict sense of the term which justifies the hyphen)', notes Jean-Claude Passeron. Like him, we have noted that viewers of images can very easily turn into seekers of the written word. The alphabet of the image can easily be a channel of access to the written alphabet.

1. Cf. L'Oeil à la page.

5. Media libraries and mediators: towards a new form of culture and a new type of reader

The comments we have just made underline the importance of the transformation of book libraries into media libraries.

Consideration needs to be given to how these new technologies and media, according to the use to which they are put, can or cannot permit increasing numbers of people to gain access to culture and in particular to written culture.

It is noteworthy that, if due care is not taken--and contrary to what might superficially be thought--the emergence and exploitation of new media only serve to widen the gap between the 'intellectual élite' and the 'also-rans' of bookish culture. For example, it is to be noted that information technology always uses typographical signs that are inaccessible to those who have got no further than 'survival reading' referred to earlier. Access to data banks is restricted to those already having access to the traditional sources of printed information. Consequently, the gap is widening between an élite increasingly informed, thanks to the multimedia, and the rest of the public. Cultural practices are cumulative and, left to themselves, technologies widen the cultural gap still further.

Should one conclude that a real democratization of access to culture in all its forms of expression and transmission is impossible?

We do not believe so, and the experiment conducted at the Public Information Library in the Georges Pompidou Centre is tending to confirm the direction which should perhaps be taken. A highly enlightening survey has been taking place into the use made of this multimedia, non-differentiated facility by a non-traditional public of amateurs consisting mainly of self-educated people, or a 'technical élite' of 'virtual illiterates' outside the very precisely defined domain of knowledge for which they have a passion, and which they tackle in a very piecemeal manner. These 'Beaubourg regulars' (unenrolled students, secondary school children, pensioners, workers, etc.) can be seen completely engrossed in the field of knowledge where their command of the subject makes up for their reading weaknesses. Their working methods are those of the auto-didact, proceeding by a gradual broadening of the scope of their studies, a method which takes them on from one medium to another (from audio-visual media to books and back). This approach, which has been called the 'technique of the landing net' makes possible a systematic scanning of a non-differentiated flow of information from a secure and precise base. The chances of 'drifting' are numerous, and can cause a constant broadening of the cultural field, as one subject after another is 'landed'.

Thus, a public which had traditionally felt excluded from the realm of the book, mobilized by a personal need for information, has now come round to using all the services of the library (thus one may see a young working-class tough explaining to an undergraduate how to use the rotary slide projector), and gains access, through a sifting of the available information, to an increasingly wide culture. The traditional cultural élites proceed in the reverse manner, starting from a general culture and proceeding by progressive specialization, their acquired information and knowledge being organized in a reticular structure (Abraham Moles).

In this way, a free-access multimedia library can become a meeting-place between two cultures that were previously totally foreign to each other, and make books available to a new readership.

This emergence of a new type of reader, who finds in the other media a way through to books and book culture, which had wrongly been regarded in the past as the culture, brings us to the role of book 'mediators': their task is a fundamental one, and their training and briefing is a key factor for a dynamic reading policy. The aim should be to train mediators for books and written culture as real guides, convinced of the social role of the library but protected against any form of book-fetishism; in short, specialists who are at the same time generalists. Just as the discovery of reading in young children should come about through the mediation of the adult reader and the pleasure of shared reading, so the book mediators should above all be communicators, whether working at the level of the school or the neighbourhood, in bookshops or libraries.

In Bulgaria, there exist societies of friends of the book working on a voluntary and unpaid basis which perform this role by organizing encounters between writers and the public, ensuring that books are available everywhere and increasing the links and exchanges between books and the other media. In the Public Information Library at the Pompidou Centre, all members of staff take it in turn to work at the public reception desks and a free telephone answering service answers all questions (guiding inquirers to other sources of information should be questions be too specialized).

So it can be seen that the library is tending to become a free-access multimedia centre, a social meeting-point and place of cultural activities on the Swedish model, a permanent source of all types of information as in the United States of America, and at times a place to obtain books. This seems to correspond more and more to what the public wants and calls into question the conception of the librarian as 'custodian'.

III. RADICAL CHANGES MASKING DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND PROSPECTS DEPENDING ON THE SECTORS INVOLVED: POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

In order to make a practical approach to the future prospects of the book and reading, we have had to situate such prospects within today's context, which we consider to be less gloomy than it is usually depicted. We have also had to assess this present context in the light of the historical developments as we can now see them.

Books are faced today with far more radical changes than have ever before been experienced.

Some see this transformation as a structural crisis which, although painful, is on the whole a positive experience, since it will enable books to live on in the future even more than in the past, as the mass communication medium par excellence. Others talk of an incurable illness, and only see any glimmer of hope for outdated structures in impossible artificial survival measures.

It must be acknowledged that the two sides are not necessarily talking of the same thing. Depending on the various sectors involved, the present situations and future prospects are quite different.

As we have seen, paperback editions are among the main reasons for the considerable rise in publication figures in all countries; these will doubtless continue to develop, but less significantly. The same applies to the club editions, which will probably pursue their advance under conditions similar to those experienced over recent years. Books for the young and children's publications

have experienced a considerable upsurge. The latest stage of this accelerated growth has been the rise in the number of children's and young people's paperback collections of excellent quality as regards both the choice of texts and the graphic design. Here again, it is to be presumed that progress will continue under the same momentum. The strip-cartoon book sector is by far the most rapidly developing; a generation of adults brought up on this form of expression has encouraged writers, illustrators and publishers to launch increasing numbers of collections in all areas (including the human sciences). It is noteworthy that this rapidly growing sector is on the borderline between what may still be considered as a book and something quite different.

However, those sectors most subject to the influences of new techniques are unquestionably school and university textbooks on the one hand and, on the other, dictionaries, encyclopedias and practical books.

1. The future of school and university textbooks

Until recent years, the school and university textbook sector had experienced constant and virtually guaranteed growth--the dream of all publishers.

It was fairly simple to ask teachers to specialists to write textbooks or reference works for the use of pupils or students whose approximate numbers were known, to have inspectors--whose name alone was enough to recommend them to teachers--write a foreword for them, and steadily to improve the illustrations, thus making it possible to sell them at higher prices. The institution of free textbooks was the first blow to this system, at least in France.

However, even more far-reaching developments were already threatening the very existence of textbooks, with the emergence of paperback editions allowing teachers of the arts and languages to refer their students to these unabridged but reasonably priced editions, to the detriment of 'anthologies of chosen passages'. This phenomenon, which to the despair of the publishers was reflected in a sharp fall in sales, was nevertheless a considerable boost for reading, since it made contemporary works or the great classics available to many students.

The most important changes in this area, however, have yet to come. The arrival of the computer in schools, whether self-contained micro-computers or terminals linked to data banks, could well, in the coming few years, render school books virtually useless. The micro-computer will allow the teacher either to programme his own teaching himself or use small floppy disks which make it possible to feed 90,000 characters into the computer, i.e. the equivalent of about one hundred type-written pages.

In this area, France seems to be one of the countries with the most widespread and determined policies. After experiments from 1972 to 1976 in 58 lycées, it was decided in 1978 to equip all lycées with self-contained micro-computers by 1986; this operation has been called '10,000 micro-computers for the lycées'. Eight computers are to be provided per school. At the same time, an intense training programme for teachers has been undertaken. The scheme is being extended to a certain number of lower secondary schools and primary schools, and to many technical lycées. These are clearly not futurist predictions, therefore, but realities for the very near future.

These computers and data banks are nevertheless going to need software inputs. If the publishers are able to respond in time, as some indeed seem to be doing in France, they could set themselves up as the suppliers of these programmes, playing their role to the full with writers trained in these new technologies. If, on the other hand, publishers prove to be incapable of adapting, they should not be surprised if these functions are performed by the computer scientists themselves, or by the computer manufacturers, as is often the case in the United States of America.

It is noteworthy that the triumphal success of these new technologies in the educational field--linked with books, as has proved possible in the case of paperback editions--may help to resolve situations of apparent stalemate. In the United States of America and France, for example, it has been calculated that an average of 2 kilograms of paper is used per pupil per school year. Under the aegis of Unesco, a school enrolment experiment has been undertaken in Cameroon; this, it was discovered, required an annual total of 300 kilograms of paper per class. Paper is costing more and more, and paper manufacture has ruinous effects on the environment. One wonders whether the new technologies might not give the developing countries access to cultural development without necessarily threatening either their autonomy or access to books.

In 1978, an experiment started in Senegal which could prove to be decisive: for six years, ten classes in the working-class areas around Dakar will be receiving primary school education by television. If the results are satisfactory, the scheme will be expanded to provide schooling for 60 per cent of Senegalese children who do not at present benefit from it. As well as being economical and of high quality, this television education also has the advantage of making it possible to give the courses in the children's mother tongue (Wolof in this particular case), a not inconsiderable benefit in this country where six different languages are spoken. It is to be emphasized that an experiment of this kind, far from discouraging the setting-up of a national publishing industry, and of educational publishing in particular, can only help it, in the long run, by providing it with the customers it needs. Other countries, such as Ivory Coast and Niger, have also undertaken similar schemes.

In the developed countries, these new opportunities will help to slow down some of the rising costs of education. They may also enable children to form a new understanding of books: in the past, they automatically tended to associate books with school, with the result that those who were put off by school eventually rejected both, while the majority gradually gave up reading once school was over.

The last remark to be made concerning the relations between teaching and the new technologies is that they seem to be opening up very encouraging prospects for dyslexics; and it is to be remembered that a greater number of school failures are to be put down to various forms of dyslexia than was even recently thought to be the case.

These technologies, which had seemed to present a mortal threat to the future of school books, may thus yet prove to be the best incentive for the discovery of a personal relationship with books.

2. Encyclopedias and dictionaries

This type of publication has, over the last ten years or so, experienced constant and uninterrupted growth both in traditional publishing and in direct sales.

Together with school books, these are the publications likely to be most severely affected in the long term by the arrival of the new technology. Here again, however, this observation needs to be qualified.

Clearly, data banks will be of invaluable use in providing the answers to precise requests for information (legal, statistical, bibliographical, etc.). Under these circumstances, and for anything that may be related to 'archiving' (telephone directories, railway timetables, press information, etc.) it is perfectly reasonable to expect that the use of paper as the substrate. Experiments in the United States of America and Canada have been conclusive, although it has admittedly been noted that users generally asked for such legal information or press articles to be printed out for them if they were at all long.

Dictionaries and encyclopedias are a quite different problem. Manageability will probably make all the difference in their case: just as it is easy to check on a date or place-name on a screen, so it is difficult to use the same screen for any lengthy item of information. It is impossible to display more than 1/24 of a page of an encyclopedia on the screen. Moreover, these works meet other needs than mere piecemeal information (alphabetical ordering, illustrations, etc.).

Thus, we are unlikely to be mistaken in saying that there is the prospect of far-reaching change in this field, although there is nothing to prove that this will be to the detriment of books. Computer publishing could just as easily encourage the production and sale of the corresponding 'paper product'. It is likely that the new products will coexist with traditional books.

Publishers seem to have understood this quite clearly, and are making plans to provide the material for data banks and new media.

3. Scientific publishing

It is mainly in this area that video disks and computers could easily replace a large part of current publications. Whenever precise, mainly piecemeal information is sought, these techniques will make it possible to obtain it more cheaply and rapidly than through the use of a printed book. Many theses and research findings could be computer-stored and reproduced on a one-off basis, which would inevitably be cheaper than publishing even a short print-run, nine-tenths of which could never be sold.

However, in this field too, books will always be valuable whenever something more than piecemeal or individual items of information is required.

4. Practical books

The emergence of a new type of book reader, one who, in search of practical information, has discovered that books satisfy his requirements, has led to a considerable development of a new sector of 'practical books' (cookery, gardening, do-it-yourself, etc.) which is experiencing constant growth. As we have already seen, the new media, far from putting an end to the function of books in this field, have tended to increase the number of customers for such books. The fact that these people may find a particular recipe or piece of advice on television is hardly likely to discourage them from reading books; on the contrary, it is likely to increase their numbers.

Wide opportunities are thus being opened up to publishers, writers and translators, but there are also new and serious problems that are going to need very rapid solution.

First and foremost is the problem of literary property. Computer works can only be used by computers, and this entails the risk of duplication of copyright. Who would be the owner of the programme? The whole status of literary property will need to be reviewed. The methods of remunerating writers and translators will also need to be changed. Finally, there are going to be increasing problems connected with reproduction and 'piracy'.

The danger is a double one: moral, if the chosen extracts or abstracts, or their presentation, misrepresent the spirit of the work inventorized by the computer, and one of economic rights, if ever the secondary publication were totally or partially to replace the original work.

Legal action has, for instance, been taken by the 'Le Monde' newspaper against the Canadian company Microfor, whose France-Actualités index constituted a 'derived work' that was liable to 'be prejudicial to the newspaper' by its selection of articles, choice of keywords and content of the abstracts', as was stated in the judgement of the Fourth Chamber of the Paris Court of Appeal (2 June 1981).

This case is a good and significant example of the type of problem that is liable to occur more and more frequently.

It has thus been confirmed that a third party is not entitled to engage in indiscriminate manipulation of someone else's intellectual work without the latter's consent. What remains now is to set out clear ground rules delimiting exactly the legitimate rights and obligations of each person, be he the 'producer' or the 'user' of information.

In addition to these perfectly legitimate problems of literary property and reproduction rights, an even more serious problem arises: by means of the new technologies, the small number of groups currently being set up in the industrialized countries and the multinationals will dominate the data banks, and this could endow them with formidable powers of control and censorship. The same applies to those governments which hold a monopoly over the audio-visual media. Perhaps a solution here would be for a proper international code of conduct to be drawn up.

A number of countries have set up organizations of a similar nature. One example is the Arts Council in the United Kingdom; in Hungary, a national centre for the promotion of the book and reading, under the authority of the Ministry of Culture, is responsible for the defence of 'quality literature'. State support of this nature, through a system of communicating vessels, enables this 'quality literature' to be sold at under cost price, thus making it cheaper than popular literature.

In Bulgaria, a publishing house has been set up under the Bulgarian Youth Organization, and enables almost any young writer to have his first works published; special magazines are given over exclusively to the works of young writers and poets (the weekly 'Pulse' in Sofia and several anthologies in other towns).

5. General literature, essays, etc.

As we have already had occasion to point out, the term 'book' covers a number of very different things.

Alongside scholarly literature, read only by the intellectual élite, there has always existed a form of literature for a wider readership, such as the books hawked by pedlars. However, in the past, even this literature, designed for entertainment or for giving practical advice, was bought by a minority of well-off, educated readers.

Over the last few decades, we have witnessed a quite new phenomenon, which has confirmed the book in its status as a mass medium and is the justification for our confidence in its future: the creation and rapid development of a wide distribution form of literature, which has gradually set up its own publishing networks and, especially, its own distribution circuits.

Admittedly, this literature is often of very mediocre quality; it is produced to be sold and has no higher ambitions. To be honest, however, we should point out that these works are at times not without merit, and do not always deserve the scorn poured on them by 'cultured' people. In any case, they play a positive role in that they are helping to dispel the sacred aura previously surrounding books which scared the general public away. These purely entertaining works or journalistic-type documents lead a life of their own (as a rule a very comfortable one) and often resurface through book clubs and paperback editions.

The upheavals which we have stressed in all sectors of the preparation, production and marketing of books have been aggravated by the existence of this wide-distribution literature, which aims for rapid general sales. As a result, it is even more difficult for a publisher to decide whether to publish a work involving greater research or simply with higher ambitions, with the attendant high financial outlay and slow selling. At the same time, it is becoming more difficult for an author or essay-writer to devote himself to works which do not provide him with a living.

For this reason, just as we believe the authorities would do well to let wide-distribution publishing and publications go their own way, to face up by themselves to the inherent risks of the market economies (as we are dealing here with market products), we believe that well thought-out diversified action should be taken to encourage ambitious publishing, quality authors and distribution structures that are adapted to a type of book which will never be as profitable as the type referred to above. This point is undoubtedly as delicate as it is important: how to encourage without controlling--which is scarcely to be desired.

One can of course envisage direct assistance, the allocation of which would be decided by competent independent commissions. In France, the Centre National des Lettres gives grants to authors or interest-free subsidies to publishers. The scheme is an interesting one from two points of view: first, the money thus allocated comes from a tax on copying machines (a sort of compensation for the loss of earnings by authors and publishers); and second, the interest-free loans are perhaps an indication of the solutions which could be found for the financial problems experienced by the publishers and mentioned earlier.

In Denmark, Finland and Sweden, writers are entitled to a percentage on all books of theirs borrowed from public libraries.

Consideration could be given to the setting up of a secure distribution system which would be more like a public service, enabling all publishers to have their works distributed throughout the country. In France, the press distribution system works in this way, whereas the book distribution system gives rise to virtually unsurmountable difficulties. However, it would seem that the Federal Republic of Germany has had some good results in this connection.

It would be possible to provide suitable tax incentives to those specialist bookshops endeavouring to put on offer a choice of works that sell slowly or with difficulty.

Here again, however, the main brunt of the action should be aimed at libraries. Their resources should be increased to allow them to purchase more works of this type. Furthermore, a proper policy of public reading, designed to increase the number of readers, would also increase the number of book-buyers. In this respect, all surveys carried out concur: in matters concerning books, figures are to be added and never subtracted--the more people attend libraries, the more they buy books, and the more the paperback or book club editions develop, the more do the traditional publications.

6. Towards a far-reaching transformation of the traditional book professions

On a more radical note, it is possible now to predict that the traditional roles and professions in the book world are going to be revolutionized, and a certain overlapping of such roles is to be expected.

Authors, for example, will more and more frequently be induced to present copy ready for printing. To do so, they will be required to respect very precise constraints which some will very probably feel are intolerable. One repercussion of this will be a far-reaching change in the role of the printer.

Libraries, now in the process of becoming media libraries, will perhaps also be required to play a specific role as part of the publishing process itself: as we have said, many scientific theses can now be stored in computers and reproduced on demand; this storage and reproduction work could nowhere be done better than in libraries.

The bookshop is unquestionably the most threatened of the traditional structures in the long term, unless it changes radically and the bookseller becomes an information seller. There will need to be a degree of complementarity between the bookseller and the librarian, as both will be book mediators and dispensers of information in all its forms. One can imagine how these transformations, which we have merely mentioned in passing, will have far-reaching consequences on publishing itself.

The 'Open University' experiments in the United Kingdom are a good illustration of such development: students work at home, using the television, which broadcasts a specific programme. The curriculum content comes in 'information packets' which the student may at the same time obtain from bookshops, which are thus involved in the educational process and become regular dispensers of information.

As far as distribution is concerned, the problem is a very complex one. The possibility of instituting a system of publication on demand, as we mentioned earlier, will perhaps make it possible to cut back on the stocks of titles that are the most difficult to sell. In the United Kingdom, 300,000 titles are currently

in print. The length of life of books raises another problem, in as far as it is becoming increasingly short (three to six months in the United States of America). In the Federal Republic of Germany, 'antiquarian bookshops for recent books' (one-year old) are now to be found. Thus, book distribution is faced with contradictory prospects: greater and greater numbers of titles with a shorter and shorter lifespan.

Of those countries which have not nationalized distribution, the quality of the system in the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany is to be underlined. In these countries, despite their great differences of scale, a book can be obtained anywhere in two days, if not the same evening, whereas in the other industrialized countries, this can take up to three weeks. The problem seems to reside in a question of quality and speed of distribution versus cost. It is difficult to decide one way or the other when given such an alternative.

In actual fact, a more detailed analysis shows that in the United Kingdom, 95 per cent of customers claim to be satisfied and say they find the book they are looking for in bookshops immediately. There remain the other 5 per cent. It would certainly be counterproductive, for the benefit of such a small proportion of customers, to have to put up the cost of distribution to any great extent, given that this would lead to a substantial rise in the price of books. It may perhaps be necessary to set up a two-tier distribution system with different costs.

IV. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

What should be the response to developments of this sort? It cannot be to try and prevent changes that are probably inevitable; it should rather be to try to ensure the survival and development of independent authors, translators, publishers and booksellers.

If a ground rule were to be established, it could, for example, be not to conduct book defence policies in the same way as reserves are set up to protect endangered species. For the time being, moreover, we do not have the impression that books are an 'endangered species': never have so many books been published in our countries, and never has so much been read. The real aim should be to institute dynamic, diversified cultural policies to promote books and reading at all levels: tax relief, support for authors and translators, assistance to publishers and booksellers, etc. At all events, it seems to us that any action taken should be part of a deliberate policy of cultural development through books and reading, for, whatever may have been said, books are clearly the most suitable mass cultural medium for individual use because of their easiness to handle, the quantity of information they can provide in a small, lightweight volume, and their price, which is still quite reasonable; moreover, books can be read anywhere without the need for bulky or expensive machines.

Action should first and foremost be directed towards children, the readers of tomorrow, and the school has a key role to play here. It should no longer be, as is so often the case today, a place for learning to read, but one for discovering books and the pleasure of reading.

This entails developing public reading at the same time and increasing the number of libraries, which should be made into places of general cultural activity (as in Sweden), designed to cater for the neighbourhood, the young, workers, the elderly, non-readers, etc. As is happening in the United Kingdom, libraries should become real media libraries where books have their place among the other media which constantly refer back to them.

We must also adopt a positive attitude towards the new technologies rather than a last-ditch defensive posture. The audio-visual media could have an advantageous effect on book sales and encourage reading. A television serial or a film can be a marvellous springboard for a recent book or ensure, in paperback, the success of a classic previously confined to merely honourable or restricted sales.

The school should remain the place where learning to read is best carried out and in addition become the place where books are discovered. As we saw earlier, the disappearance of textbooks and anthologies of chosen passages in favour of paperback books marked a considerable step forward. This move needs to be given further momentum: access to books should be made as easy and natural as possible for children, and from this point of view, nothing can take the place of the classroom library, although it is also vital for a school to have a documentation centre.

The increasing numbers of collections of children's books of high graphical quality, written by talented authors and available at reasonable prices, open up very encouraging prospects. Not to be overlooked either is the fact that these books are on sale in the big stores and supermarkets and thus accessible to that part of the public which never enters a bookshop and which, through the shared discovery of such books with its children, will perhaps one day come round to reading itself. Might not this shared reading idea, so heavily stressed by specialists in children's reading, work both ways?

In any case, one certain result of the existence of children's and adolescents' paperback collections is that they no longer automatically reject books at the end of childhood (often coinciding with the end of schooling); on the contrary, it enables them to move on, without any break in continuity, from childhood to adult reading. It is incidentally a matter of increasing concern to librarians to desegregate the different sections of their libraries to the maximum and encourage free access by the young to all the shelves.

This concern is in line with the insights of the leading children's book specialists and writers. One of these, François Ruy-Vidal, writes: 'There is no children's art, just art. There are no graphics for children, just graphics. There are no children's colours, just colours. There is no children's literature, just literature ... On the basis of these four principles, it may be said that a children's book is a good book when it is a good book for everybody'. Michel Tournier, considered to be one of the best French authors and one of the best writers of books for children, with whom he maintains close contact through frequent classroom visits, says the same thing when he claims that he never writes specially for children, merely that the best texts he has written are those he feels able to offer to them.

To an even greater extent than in the past, the school of tomorrow could become a place for the discovery of reading and for personal contact with books, which will then continue out of school. However, the means with which to achieve this must be provided. The existence of the new collections of children's books, the increase in the number of paperback editions, the sale of books in big stores, the desegregation of the libraries, all these are encouraging signs, and an illustration of the new opportunities of access to books being given to a wider public.

For this purpose, teachers will need to be more aware of their potential role as stimulators in this fundamental field: classroom libraries (and free access and choice of books), organized activities in connection with books, visits from writers, exhibitions, etc., everything should be made to contribute to the establishment of a personal relationship with books. This will also require greater efforts on the

part of the educational system to train teachers at all levels in this role of stimulators, and this same concern must be explicitly reflected in curricula.

2. For a dynamic public reading policy

In the course of this report, it has become clear that books are not under direct threat from technological change and the new economic conditions they are encountering--the technologies themselves are neutral but they lead to very different consequences depending on the use to which they are put. We have, however, concluded that the future of books is dependent more than anything on the future of reading, and by extension, of that of readers. All the statistics confirm that where books are concerned the factors add up and produce a multiplier effect: any book reader (whatever the book) is a potential book buyer.

Thus we believe that the main thrust in promoting the future of books should first be directed at libraries and public reading. On this point, the experiences of our various countries are complementary and mutually enlightening.

The United Kingdom and the countries of North America have gained a considerable lead in this area, probably because of the special relationship that the Protestants formed with the 'book of books'--the Bible--to which they had direct access, unlike the Catholics who were discouraged from individual Bible-reading for fear that this might lead to free interpretation. Be that as it may, during the nineteenth century, whilst France concentrated its cultural development efforts on schools, the United States of America and the United Kingdom attached more importance to establishing networks of libraries, seen as living centres for documentation and direct access to culture. French libraries, for their part, were more like repositories for the culture of an élite in the same way as museums, with which they often shared premises.

In Sweden, the library is seen as a place of organized cultural activities, a lively centre from which a dynamic and open cultural life can radiate outwards.

In Denmark, as in other countries with a relatively small population, public reading is seen as an indirect way of helping authors without dragooning them.

The countries with socialist-type economies have developed policies favouring the setting up of libraries at places of work. In Hungary and Yugoslavia the law provides that any enterprise employing over 500 persons must have a library with a full-time professional librarian.

The different characteristics given by each country to its public reading promotion activities give us an insight into what an ideal cultural policy might be, supported by a wide network of libraries and by that very circumstance helping to promote books in every shape and form.

Accessible libraries everywhere

The first important point is to ensure that libraries are omnipresent: in town centres of course, but also on new housing estates and in rural areas. Inspiration should be drawn not just from the United Kingdom's county library system, which allows nationwide distribution, but also from the French central lending libraries, which provide depository and mobile library services.

This, however, is not enough. The setting up of workplace libraries and stocks of books in factory workshops (as in Sweden), libraries in schools, classrooms, hospitals, prisons and such like should also be encouraged.

Victor Hugo's saying should be heeded and adapted to modern circumstances: 'Wherever there is a mind, let there be a book'.

Lively, welcoming places

These omnipresent libraries should be places of intense cultural life and not lifeless depositories. To achieve this, they should first be made open places.

Open to the public: the design and lay out of the premises and the opening hours should be adapted to meet this requirement and permit free access to books.

Open to other media: libraries should become media libraries, allowing users access to records and cassettes, slides and films, and computer terminals, as well as to books. The library should become a place where the public is placed in contact with all the media that characterize our civilization, and where they can rediscover the specific quality of books through such contact.

Catering for all

For children and the young: we saw earlier how important it was to break the association in the child's mind between books and the classroom library. The development of documentation centres in schools is freeing the classroom library from this image, and the bookshelves should be desegregated as rapidly as possible in order to give children easy and unhindered access to all books; in this connection, we have underlined the positive role being played by paperbacks for children and adolescents.

For the elderly: our societies are ageing and increasing numbers of people are finding more time for leisure than their working lives had prepared them for. Reading can for many be a rediscovery, if not a new discovery: stocks of books and co-ordination with senior citizens' clubs and universities can incline these people towards active contact with books.

For the general non-reading public: in addition to the measures already mentioned in favour of neighbourhood and workplace libraries, this opening-out towards a new public will be made possible by turning libraries into real centres of cultural activity.

Real centres of cultural activity

Libraries are relatively manageable structures by comparison with museums, theatres or cultural centres; are generally more flexible than other large-scale facilities, and above all can cater for a much larger and more active public.

It might therefore be possible to turn libraries, scattered through all areas, rural as well as urban, of the country into active cultural centres around which a full local cultural life can be organized. This in itself would help books to become, without detriment to the specificity of the other media, the instrument of culture and mass communication at the service of the public which is increasingly required in our civilization of today.

The end of the 'custodian' concept

The idea of the librarian as a sort of 'custodian' refers back to a range of associations linked with the past. A new term should be found to emphasize the active role we should like to see him play as a cultural animator working on the basis of books.

Mentalitites change slowly, but to take one example we believe to be highly important, a certain number of libraries in France now treat adult strip-cartoon books, detective stories or science fiction novels as books in the full sense, on a par with the more traditional publications. This is attracting a new readership, often highly motivated and well informed, to these premises which they would never have considered visiting previously. This is due to a genuine revolution in mentalities: the 'custodians' first had to discover the existence of these new areas of modern publishing and to acknowledge their value, as for records, cassettes or slides, which are now also beginning to be found in libraries.

Removing the aura from books

Books were able to survive and live on down through the centuries because of their sacral aura; but this is precisely what is threatening their existence today in the face of competition from the other media, which are now gradually becoming a part of our everyday lives and which are, by nature, devoid of any such aura and purely functional.

Action of the type we are advocating will tend to turn the book into a medium like other media: paradoxically, our hope for its salvation lies in this loss of a distinctive status.

Libraries would seem to us to be among the places where this change could be brought about. Many steps are being taken in this direction, all seeking to prove to the public that writing is not a form of expression for an élite alone.

Experiments have been conducted in the classroom and with groups of children and young people to encourage them to write books themselves. For instance, Marc Soriano recommends the setting-up of 'literary workshops'. Similar action in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Yugoslavia has enabled amateur writers or retired workers to set down their recollections of their work and lives; some of these have been published. Similarly, there has been a flood of biographies of craftsmen or peasant farmers in France over the last decade or so. The trend--which in many cases may have gone too far--seems to be towards making writing a form of expression more open to all and books a popular medium.

Literary workshops such as these, at times leading on to publication, open to the young, the elderly, workers, etc., could become one of the functions of tomorrow's library, with the help of professional authors.

Places to obtain books

We saw earlier that the existence of a network of specialist bookshops was a fundamental prerequisite for that of independent publishers who, in turn, allow the book to survive and flourish.

Unfortunately, such bookshops are finding it increasingly difficult to subsist. They should be helped, through tax relief and various other incentives, to remain faithful to their specific role.

In return, however, one is entitled to demand that the booksellers be competent. It is important that they should be properly and fully trained for a job which cannot seriously be likened to that of a greengrocer or seller of domestic appliances. The fact is, however, that in France, for example, no training of the sort exists. In this country, where there are 30,000 points of sale for books, in the widest sense of the term, there are about 3,000 bookshops proper whose main activity is the selling of books. Of these, it is generally considered that there are no more than 600 to 800 really worthy of the name, a figure which drops to as little as 200 to 300 when it comes to certain special subjects (human sciences, etc.).

Thus, the bookshops need help, but help first and foremost to become proper bookshops, with the requirement that their owners be truly competent, after which all sorts of assistance could be contemplated for these real bookshops. But the profession will always remain a business as well, and the most effective form of assistance outside tax arrangements will be to increase the number of book buyers. To do this, as we have seen, public reading must be promoted. In places where there is no bookshop, it might be necessary to envisage, in one form or another, the possibility of potential readers being able to buy books at the library.

This is a difficult point for, at one and the same time, one must endeavour to encourage and facilitate the sale of books in all parts of the country and avoid causing any prejudice to booksellers.

One possibility might be to organize various activities in connection with books in libraries, and then provide for their sale in one or more bookshops. In Sweden, Norway, Yugoslavia and Hungary, frequent and regular sales of books are also held at places of work. This could be more widely practised.

3. The future of books

What will the future bring for books?

In the coming decade one may safely say that no major changes will occur in relation to the present situation. The trends which have become apparent will gather momentum; there will be further reorganization, publishers will continue to join forces or to close down whilst others will set up in business. It is to be expected that the book will survive, without major change, as it is today. Alongside it, new media, which are already taking up position, will gradually work their way into schools, libraries and the home.

There can be doubt that in the years to come it is economic conditions that will weigh most heavily on the future of the book. The rise in cost prices and distribution costs, and particularly the burden imposed by the terms of financing, will cause more and more traditional publishers and clubs to bring out wide-market, rapid-sale books to the detriment of essays and other more ambitious works of literature.

If nothing is done to offset this trend, we will increasingly see two different relationships forming towards books: on the one hand there will be an élitist relationship with a certain type of book that is becoming increasingly difficult to publish, and on the other, a mass relationship with general-consumption literature.

In the longer term, it is clearly difficult to say what will become of books. Two hypotheses may be envisaged, however, depending on whether the trends described above are left to continue unchecked, or a real cultural policy based on books is energetically applied.

Under the first hypothesis, it is just conceivable that books will slowly but surely die out, the roles they currently fill being taken over by the other media, with all the attendant risks this implies for freedom and individual expression.

But one may also imagine a world in which books remain and establish themselves even more firmly as the medium for mass communication they have become during the past century, finding their rightful place alongside the other media, which refer back to them in their specific function. This, however, requires concerted and determined action based on a certain number of guidelines we shall now recapitulate.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR A BOOK POLICY

The measures needed to encourage access to books by a wider public and to develop reading are very diverse in nature and involve publishers, booksellers, distributors, authors, translators, schools and libraries, etc. The very fact that they are so diverse makes it difficult to find any overall solution, which could very soon prove to be over-simplified and restrictive. This gives greater relevance than ever to Unesco's now long-standing suggestion that every country set up a National Book Council, where all specialists of the book professions, the various authorities involved and the users could beneficially meet and exchange ideas. In such councils, all the problems would need to be identified and discussed, and solutions suited to each country worked out.

A certain number of guidelines can already be put forward:

1. It seems vital to us that a wide network of diversified and independent publishers and booksellers should continue to exist and expand to counter the phenomena of concentration and standardization now developing. This means adopting certain tax arrangements which should be discussed with those concerned.

As we have seen, as far as the publishers are concerned, it is the terms of financing that are forcing them to become part of a cycle based on the logic of an economic system geared only to immediate profit, thus gradually condemning all ambitious literature and making it impossible for the small independent publishers--on whom the future depends--to survive. It is therefore essential that a low-interest financing system be created to give publishers freedom and responsibility and at the same time enable them to finance their production without tying them in with groups which would inevitably drag them into the cycle of concentration and the logic of short-term profit.

The continued existence of publishers and booksellers is increasingly dependent on their distribution capacity and costs. It would therefore seem desirable for the authorities to ensure the existence of an independent distribution network enabling any publisher to have his products made quickly and relatively cheaply available to a nationwide public.

An independent financing scheme and distribution network are in our view essential for the development of these publishers and booksellers, without whom quality literature cannot continue to exist.

Translation, which enables the culture of a particular nation to spread beyond its frontiers, is becoming more and more costly. It is to be hoped, therefore, that various forms of assistance will be developed to encourage and facilitate the sale of rights and translations abroad; but it would doubtless be beneficial if an international organization--the work of Unesco in this connection can be taken as a useful point of reference--were to ensure that this sector, which is essential for inter-cultural exchange, did not have to depend solely on what might be termed the cultural 'great powers'.

2. As regards authors, we have already said that the best help they could possibly be given would be to encourage reading of their books. Nevertheless, specific measures could be taken to facilitate the life and work of writers, especially the authors of less accessible works. Such action could involve general tax measures or more personal assistance: grants, sabbaticals, part-time jobs in a cultural field enabling authors to go on writing, etc.

What seems to us to be of the greatest importance for the future is the definition of new rules of literary property in all matters relating to work involving computers, and of a new method of remunerating authors for these new forms of dissemination of their works.

Also of vital importance is a clear definition of a status for translators and full acknowledgement of their rights, as stated in the Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations and the Practical Means to Improve the Status of Translators adopted by the General Conference of Unesco in 1976.

3. As for libraries, substantial resources should be made available for them to cover both town and countryside thoroughly, to become real centres of cultural activity, to be able, through their acquisition policy, to give, direct encouragement to publishers and authors to pursue ambitious projects, and finally to pay back, through a system of which the details remain to be worked out, a fee to authors for books lent out.

More fundamentally ...

... and we should like to conclude on this point, since in our view the future of reading (and hence of books) depends on this--all possible ways and means should be sought to make people active.

As we have remarked, and as is borne out by surveys and numerous experiments, new readers are recruited among active people, whatever the nature of their activities may be (sport, cultural activities or an active relationship with television). There is a relationship and exchange between reading and all other activities, be they cultural or otherwise.

In our industrialized countries, the trend is towards an increase in free time (reduced working hours, unemployment, rapidly rising numbers of retired people). It is important that this increasing section of the population with time on their hands should not waste that time but should be offered a very wide range of activities, in the knowledge that this will, what is more, make readers of them.

The important thing, therefore, is to work towards an active, global book strategy transcending the various sectoral policies, in the awareness that this is where the best hope for the future of books and of reading lies.